



CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

NEWS...

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CALFED Reviews Thousands of Comments

CALFED's technical staff and policy makers have reviewed and evaluated the thousands of comments received on the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) released in March of this year.

The public comment period closed July 1 at which time CALFED staff tallied more than 1,500 letters from private citizens, businesses and public agencies; several thousand form letters and postcards; and more than 400 spoken comments delivered at 17 public hearings. CALFED Program staff estimates that this amounts to more than 10,000 individual comments on Program elements. These comments are important to the development of a preferred program alternative and are being used to make changes and modifications in CALFED's common programs.

View Comments On Line

The CALFED draft EIS/EIR, technical appendices and the written comments received during the public review period are available at the CALFED website. Use the "Environmental Documents" button.

<http://calfed.ca.gov>

"Several key issues emerged from the public review process that require additional analysis," said Lester Snow, executive director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. "These relate to water conservation, new water storage and conveyance facilities, agricultural issues, protection of area of origin and general water rights and financing implementation of the solution."

The revised draft programmatic EIS/EIR and Phase II Report will include explanations on how the program has changed in response to these comments, and a summary of the comments and responses. A complete response to comments document will be published next year.

Draft Program Alternative in December

CALFED decision-makers have agreed on a framework for the draft preferred alternative and early implementation actions, which include a strategy for Delta conveyance. Comments from the public and stakeholders were critical factors in devising the strategy and draft alternative plan. The revised Phase II Report, identifying the preferred alternative, will be released in December.

Key components to the framework are:

- Staged implementation and staged decision-making;

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- Pledge for continuous improvement in all resources areas;
- Assurances and finance package;
- Delta conveyance strategy;
- Water supply reliability measures;
- 1998-99 actions.

In meetings last summer, Gov. Pete Wilson and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt re-emphasized their determination to have a draft Bay-Delta solution by year-end and agreed to the principles that are the basis of this framework.

Staged implementation and decision-making means identifying and executing certain actions at the outset of the program for which there is sufficient information and general agreement, while developing conditions and gathering information for future decisions – an adaptive management philosophy and process.

Stakeholders have been particularly concerned with what actions will take place in Stage 1 of program implementation, and how the program will deal with storage and conveyance. Proposed actions and related assurances are undergoing review and modification, with input from the state and federal agencies and stakeholders.

The first stage of implementation will be a seven-year period commencing with the certification of the programmatic EIS/EIR. Stage 1 must:

- Result in overall improvement for all resource areas;
- Provide stability in the water resource management framework;
- Improve conditions in the Bay-Delta system for listed and proposed species;
- Have a mix of public and private funding;

- Build the information needed to make the decisions leading to Stage 2;
- Address the conditions and linkages for storage and conveyance.

The approach to conveyance facilities recognizes that some actions to restore the Delta and protect fisheries and public health can and should take place immediately; for other actions, more study and analysis is required. Therefore, the primary strategy is to develop a through-Delta conveyance alternative based on the existing Delta configuration and modifications, doing everything practical to achieve CALFED goals. The contingent strategy is to include a dual-Delta conveyance with an isolated facility if the primary strategy does not meet CALFED goals and solution principles. An isolated facility would be constructed if, after aggressive implementation of the through-Delta solution, there remained a public health risk and/or fisheries did not improve. This decision would also be coupled with several assurances.

The revised Phase II Report, which will include a draft preferred alternative and framework, staged implementation plan, assurances and financial strategy, and detailed Stage 1 actions, and revised Programmatic EIS/EIR will be released in December. The revised documents will include updated information about the common programs and summary responses to the comments received in the formal public comment period earlier this year.

These documents will be available at public libraries; by calling CALFED at 1-800-900-3587; and on the Web site.

Regional Meetings Spur Additional Input

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program has held several regional meetings to update local residents on the Program's progress and gain additional input on the draft solutions following the close of the formal public comment period July 1.

Delta area residents expressed their concerns about the construction of an isolated facility at recent meetings. Over 200 people attended an August meeting in the Delta which focused on mitigating impacts to agricultural land. A second workshop coincided with the September meeting of the Bay-Delta Advisory Council (BDAC). The community was updated on changes to the program made in response to their comments and concerns.

However, efforts to utilize public or soon-to-be public lands for ecosystem restoration projects met with general approval. Between 26,000 and 27,000 acres of lands have been identified that could meet restoration goals for Stage 1 of the program.

The next BDAC meeting is Oct. 29-30 at the Capitol Plaza Holiday Inn in Sacramento.

Delta Documentary on PBS

Californians can learn about the Delta through "Setting a Course - The California Bay-Delta," a one-hour public television documentary airing on PBS stations around the state. It was developed and produced by the non-profit Water Education Foundation. Actor and Delta-resident Timothy Busfield, star of *thirtysomething* and *Field of Dreams* hosts the program. CALFED is one of several program co-sponsors.

"Setting a Course" examines the history of the Bay-Delta system and efforts to fix the complex water and ecosystem problems. The viewpoints of the many diverse stakeholders involved in the CALFED decision-making process are represented.

Videocassette copies of the program and Viewer's Guides are available from the Water Education Foundation. Call your local PBS station for information about when the program will air, or call the Foundation at 916-444-6240.

Web Site Expansion

The CALFED Web site has a new, more user-friendly look. A new "Programs" button has been added for access to information about each of the common programs and CMARP (the Comprehensive Monitoring, Assessment and Research Program). Public meeting agendas also will be posted.

Two important draft documents are on the Web for public review and input: "Developing a Draft Program Alternative" and "Draft Staging and Implementation Plan." These are the working documents which will form the basis of the draft program alternative and staged implementation plan that will be released later this year (see "Draft Program Alternative," above).

Translated Outreach Materials, Delta Primer Available

The CALFED Program overview is available in five languages - Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. Reaching California's diverse multi-cultural communities is an important part of CALFED's public outreach program. The fact sheets can be downloaded from the CALFED Web site or obtained by calling CALFED.

Copies of "California's Bay-Delta: The Problem, the Process and the Potential" also are available. The 30-page booklet provides an overview of the problems in the Bay-Delta system, the CALFED process, and the proposed solutions. Distribute the primer at your next public meeting, presentation, or community event. Call CALFED for copies.





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*The mission of the CALFED Bay-Delta
Program is to develop a long-term
comprehensive plan that will restore ecological
health and improve water management for
beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system.*



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